

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 INR-05
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 0624

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IR
SUBJ: SHAH NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW RECEIVES MAJOR EXPOSURE HERE

REF: (A) TEHRAN 0468, (B) 76 TEHRAN A-223

1. SHAH NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW (REF A) GIVEN FEATURE PLAY IN ALL TEHRAN NEWSPAPERS JAN 18 AND TEXT READ ON NIRT V EVENING NEWS JAN 17. SHAH HAS GIVEN SEVERAL INTERVIEWS OVER PAST TWO MONTHS, BUT SCOPE AND PROMINENCE OF PRESENTATION HERE HIGHLY UNUSUAL. THIS AND OTHER INDICATIONS (SEPTEL FOR DEPT) SUGGEST SHAH BECOMING ANXIOUS OVER TURN OF EVENTS IN REGION AND USING THIS INTERVIEW AND OTHERS TO EXPRESS CONCERN AND UNCERTAINTY OVER ENVOLVING REGIONAL SITUATION AS WELL AS UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT ATTITUDES OF NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION.

2. LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS FOCUSED ON BROADER POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF INTERVIEW, NAMELY THE CONSEQUENCES OF DROP IN OIL PRODUCTION FOR REGIONAL PEACE, IRAN'S EFFORTS TO HELP PROVIDE REGIONAL STABILITY, IRAN'S OWN SECURITY POSITION, AND PLEA TO DEVELOPED WORLD TO TAKE GREATER INITIATIVES TOWARD RESOLVING PROBLEMS OF POORER

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COUNTRIES.

3. SHAH MADE VEILED HINT THAT IRAN MIGHT HAVE TO REDUCE ITS FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT AND CONCERN, PARTICULARLY IN GULF AND INDIAN OCEAN, IF OIL PRODUCTION DROP COST IT REVENUES (PARA 4, REF A). HE IS MAKING POINT, THAT IRANIAN REACTION TO ATTEMPTS TO FORCE IT ECONOMICALLY TO OE SAUDI PRICE

MARK WILL HAVE CONSEQUENCES IN OTHER AREAS AS WELL. GOI HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED CUTBACK IN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE BASED ON EXPECTED BUDGETARY SHORTFALL, AND WHILE THIS MAY NOT REACH ANNOUNCED DIMENSIONS, IT WILL STILL BE A REDUCTION FROM ORIGINALLY ALLOCATED AMOUNTS (REF B). WHILE EMBASSY DOUBTS SHAH WOULD REACT AS MUCH AS HE HAS INDICATED, AND NEWSWEEK STATEMENT IS TO SOME EXTENT BLUFF, THERE IS NO DOUBT HERE THAT SHAH AND GOI BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT WAY OIL PRICE SITUATION IS EVOLVING AND LOSING THEIR CUSTOMARY CONFIDENCE TO SOME EXTENT. CALL FOR DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES IS PART OF SAME ATTEMPT TO EASE WHAT IRANIANS SEE AS GROWING PRESSURES ON IRAN AND OTHER OPEC GOVERNMENTS TO BACK OFF FROM ANNOUNCED OIL PRICE INCREASES TO DETRIMENT OF DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY POLICIES.

4. TWO ADDITIONAL ITEMS IN INTERVIEW DESERVE COMMENT, SHAH'S STATEMENT ON NUCLEAR REPROCESSING SEEMED MORE RELAXED THAN PREVIOUSLY. SHAH SAID IRAN "IS STICKING REGOROUSLY BY ALL IMPLICATIONS" OF NPT. CONCERNING IDEA OF REGIONAL NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING CENTER, SHAH'S STATEMENT SEEMED A BIT MORE FLEXIBLE THAN PREVIOUS GOI/AEOI COMMENTS: SHAH EMPHASIZED IRAN'S NEED FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS WHILE SAYING, "IF A (REGIONAL REPROCESSING CENTER) IS ACCEPTED BY ALL" THEN IRAN WOULD GO ALONG WITH IT. HE THEN ADDED, "OTHERWISE, I WON'T EVEN ASK FOR THAT".

5. SECOND ITEM IS ALLUSION TO POSSIBILITY IRAN-SAUDI GOOD RELATIONS MIGHT NOT ALWAYS REMAIN DIVORCED FROM CONTRETEMPS
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OVER OIL POLICY (PARA 2 REF A). SHAH PROBABLY INTENDED HIS REMARKS AS INDICATION THERE ARE LIMITS TO IRANIAN NON-LINKAGE, BUT WHOLE PASSAGE IS EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF UNCERTAIN MOOD AND TO SOME EXTENT WHISTLING IN THE DARK NOW PREVAILING. GIVEN SHAH'S PRESENT UNCERTAINTY ON GENERAL EVOLUTION IN REGION AND U.S. INTENTIONS--THERE STILL REMAINS LINGERING AND REAL SUSPICION THAT U.S. ENGINEERED OR AT VERY LEAST SUPPORTED AUDI INTRANSIGENCE AT DOHA--EMBASSY BELIEVES SHAH IS SEARCHING FOR A HANDLE ON WHAT TO DO NEXT AND FEELING OUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH HIS CONCERNS, WELL-PUBLICIZED AS THEY ARE, DRAW HELPFUL REACTIONS FROM OTHERS.

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